BRITISH COLUMBIA

Education Report

INVESTMENTS IN TRADES TRAINING

The Province is helping students take advantage of B.C.'s many opportunities in the skilled trades. The latest investments are:

- $3 million to help schools around the province purchase more trades-training equipment so that students can learn with the latest tools.
- $850,000 for a mobile trades unit to improve access to skills training for students in the Kamloops/Thompson school district.

B.C. students can get their level one industry certification and even make money as an apprentice while they earn their secondary school diploma. Read more about the ***equipment grants*** or ***mobile trades-training unit.***

Bond prepares a pasta lunch with student Trish Koski at Salmon Arm Secondary.

HOT TOPIC

The BCTF is back at the bargaining table and has until June 30 to reach a new contract and secure a sizable bonus for individual teachers. I am optimistic about these talks for several reasons:

- More than 50 agreements with tens of thousands of public sector employees were reached by the March 31 deadline.
- Mediator Vince Ready's interim report has laid out a "blueprint" for teacher bargaining to focus negotiations.
- Already, five agreements have been reached for contracts that expire this summer.

All public sector agreements that have been reached to date are four years or longer. The government has set a $6 billion negotiating financial envelope, based on what taxpayers can afford – and all agreements are within that financial envelope.

These long-term agreements contribute to fiscal stability and certainty in the delivery of public services as we head towards the 2010 Olympics. If we meet our financial targets for 2009, these long-term agreements also mean that public sector employees will receive an incentive payment of up to $1,000. That's over and above the bonus they received for reaching agreements by March 31. Teachers and support staff are also eligible for this additional bonus.

We recognize there is much hard work to do, with agreements still to be reached with the province's teachers and support staff. Mr. Ready's interim report provides a welcome guide to take us to June 30.

So far, we are off to a good start. There have been five days of bargaining and the tone is positive. Each side has submitted their proposals and they are meeting again this week.

- Meeting agendas and minutes;
- Vince Ready's Report
- FAQs on class size, funding, school libraries, and special needs;
- Key facts on B.C.'s education system

Message from Minister Shirley Bond

Honourable Shirley Bond Minister of Education

On the latest math and reading tests for 15-year-olds, B.C. students outperformed their peers from countries circling the globe. I believe that where there are strong students, there are dedicated educators. One example of that is Charlie Coleman, principal at Khowhemun Elementary in Duncan, who recently won an international award, the Outstanding Young Educator Award from the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Charlie was honoured earlier this month in Chicago in front of an audience of more than 11,000.

I've had the pleasure of meeting Charlie several times, and hearing his success story firsthand. Khowhemun Elementary is a small school with a large Aboriginal population. When Charlie started as principal, a third of the students were not meeting expectations. Charlie introduced a variety of safe school initiatives, expanded the Aboriginal culture program, and promoted parent involvement. Students improved. In fact, Khowhemun elementary has flourished under Charlie's leadership.

Charlie won national acclaim when he was named one of "Canada's Outstanding Principals" in 2005 and when Khowhemun Elementary was included in the Top 40 Schools in Canada. ASCD selected Charlie for the leadership and team-building he displayed in increasing student achievement in math and reading. Congratulations Charlie and thank you for uniting a community in the interest of its young people and helping give B.C. students the skills needed to continue to be among the best in the world.

Reading Corner

Patsy, the baby of the Small family, has big problems: older siblings. This story about bullying has comic moments and a heartwarming ending. Jean Little has written over 25 children's books and has won a Canadian Library Association medal. This book, suitable for students in grades K–3, was suggested by the Coquitlam Public Library.

"Revenge of the Small Small"
Written by Jean Little
Illustrated by Janet Wilson